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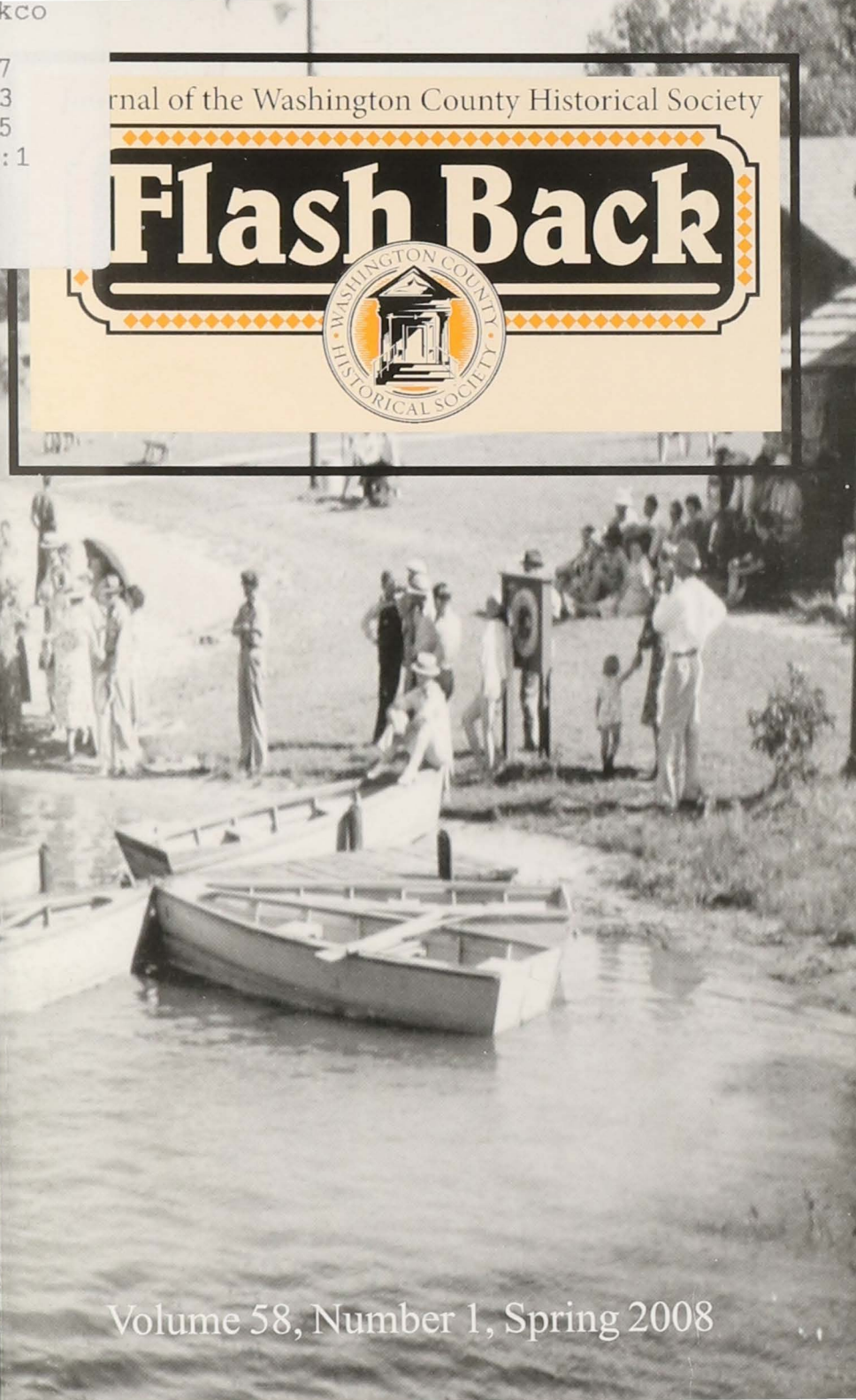
Flash Back



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FLASHBACK

Journal of
the Washington County Historical Society

Volume 58 **Spring 2008** **Number 1**

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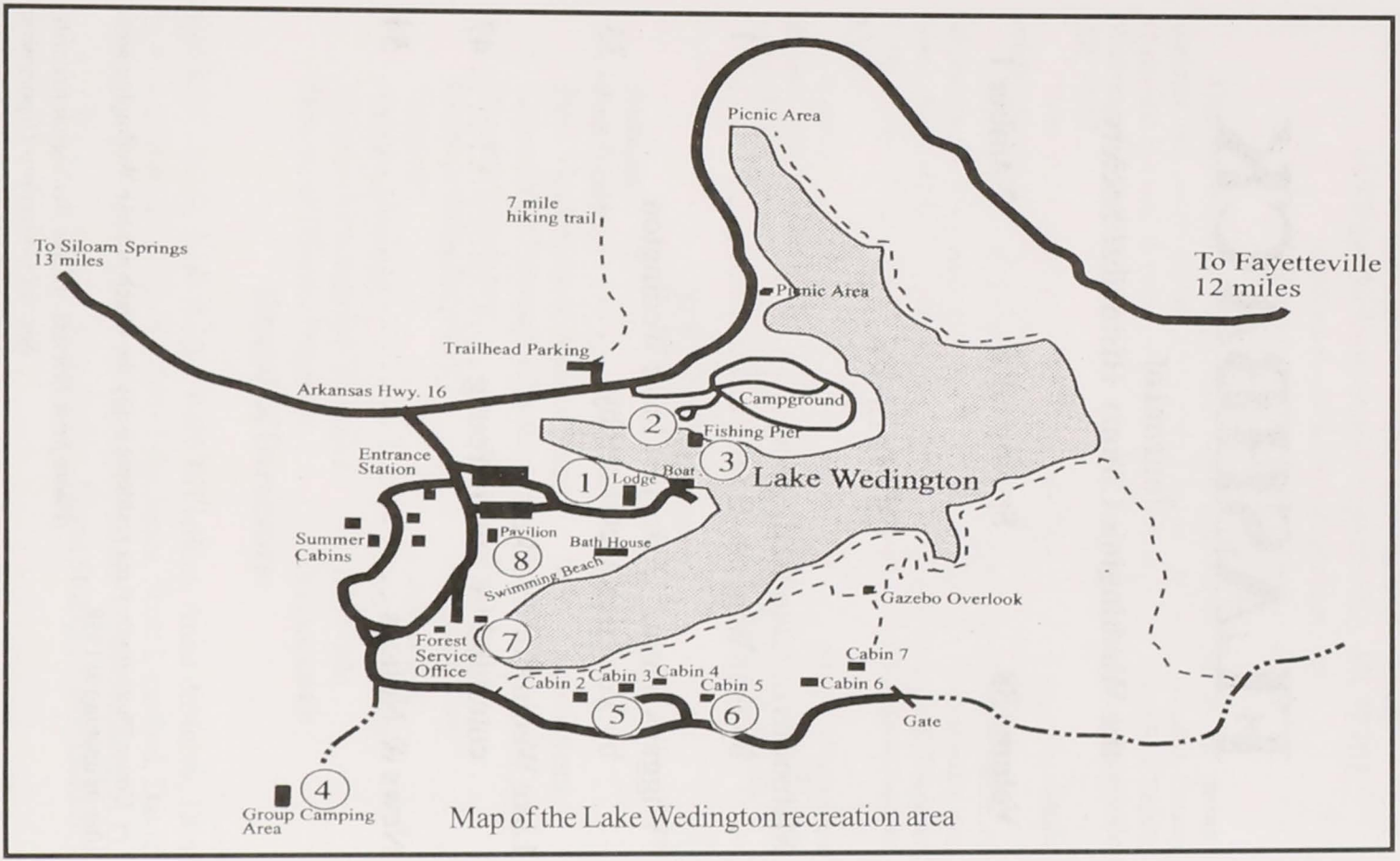
Cover Photograph: Area residents enjoy the beach at Lake Wedington soon after its opening in 1938.

(Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries



Map of the Lake Wedington recreation area

MEMORIES OF LAKE WEDINGTON

Ann Wiggans Sugg*

I was born just one year after the stock market crash of 1929, and almost all of my childhood was during the Great Depression. As a result of this dire economic condition President Franklin D. Roosevelt devised a plan known as the New Deal, consisting of numerous projects to alleviate the suffering of so many people who could not find work. In 1935 one such plan, the Wedington Project, was to have far reaching effects on my life and the lives of thousands of people in the Ozark foothills of Northwest Arkansas, including my family.

As a five-year-old child, I was largely untouched by the Depression, except that we had named our dog Deppy, short for Depression. My daddy, C.B. Wiggans, always had a job, but as a teacher at the University of Arkansas, he, along with the entire faculty, recently had voluntarily taken a cut in salary in order to ensure their jobs. I also remember some of my friends' fathers not having regular jobs, and other families that made the trek to California seeking a better life. Some came back; others stayed.

Tramps coming around the neighborhood looking for work was a regular occurrence. They would offer to work for a meal. Many times our lawn got mowed that way or the meal was given even if there was no work to be done. The food would be put on a plate and the lucky man would sit on the back steps and gratefully eat his meal. As I recall, there was no fear of these men, as it was so common for good men to be on the road living from hand to mouth.

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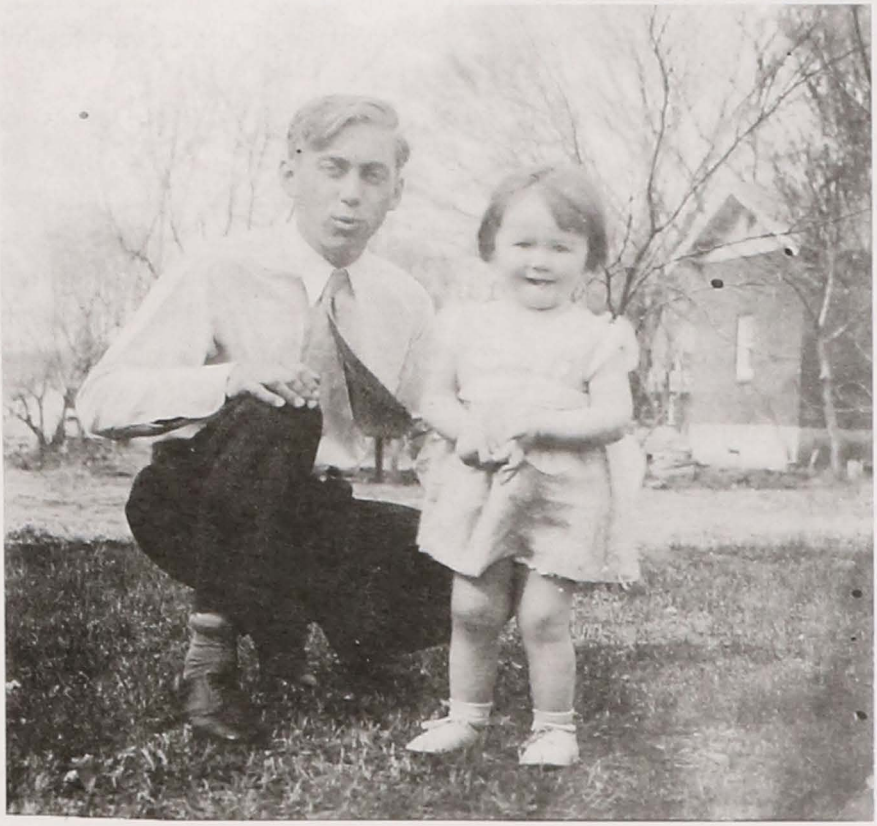
*Ann Wiggans Sugg is the daughter of C.B. Wiggans, the Lake Wedington Project Manager. An active member of the Washington County Historical Society, she serves as chairman of the Society's New Vision for Celebrating History Task Force, whose aim is to raise enough funds for an endowment for continued and expanded WCHS operations.

FLASHBACK

While the most urgent need addressed by the Wedington Project was providing jobs, there were more long-reaching goals as well. Addressing the suffering farm economy, a prime goal was to reclaim marginal farm land depleted by years of strawberry farming. The land was to be seeded for grass to rebuild good pasture land, and the woodlands were to replanted with stands of pine, walnut, and black locust.

The relocation of the families who had been trying to eke out of meager living was an equally important goal. The farmers were to be assisted in locating better farms if they so desired. Then, of course, the recreational aspect was the most visible and undoubtedly the part that was to benefit the greatest number of people throughout the years.



C.B. Wiggans, Lake Wedington Project Manager, and his daughter Ann, ca. 1931.

Photo courtesy of the author

So it was that the idea of the Wedington Project came into my life and the lives of so many in Northwest Arkansas. The first that we knew of this plan was when my 35-year old daddy was tapped to be the project manager. I believe that B. N. Gile who was the regional director for the U. S. Department of Agriculture Land Utilization Program had known my daddy previously. At any rate when he was offered the job he gladly accepted and Dr. Gile became his immediate superior. Although the pay was more, I am sure, than what he was being paid at the U of A, and that was surely a factor, I am equally sure that the challenge of the job was even more enticing to him.

When the office first opened it was located in Springdale, but later it was moved to Fayetteville. There was a strong tie between the U of A and the U. S. Government on the project, and the offices were housed in Old Main on the campus. We always referred to it as "The Project" and continued to for years to come. My daddy still called it The Project when we went there for picnics to his dying day almost 40 years later. It was a Project long before it was a lake, and of course encompassed much more than the lake.

One of Daddy's first tasks was assembling a staff, and I know that must have been a pleasure to him, as there were so many competent people who were excited about the challenge of the new project and grateful for the good salaries. Many of them were local people, most of whom my Daddy already knew. Among the ones I can remember is Carl Smith, father of Ada Lee (Shook), and who later was city engineer for Fayetteville. Chester Spies, his good friend from Winslow and father of Jean (Crone) and her older sister Mary Elizabeth, had moved his family back to Iowa. When Daddy called and told Mr. Spies that he needed his help, back they came. Harry Birkinsha, J. F. Backstrom, and Pat Murphy, father of attorney, Bill Murphy, were all from Fayetteville. Wayne Smith was from Winslow, and Larry Deweese and Lynn "Chicken" Ricketts were from Rogers, I believe. Ray Scoggins and Hugh Hurd were both from Decatur. The secretarial staff included Jean Porter Wylie, sister of Mother's good friend Jimmie Porter and wife of Ted Wylie, longtime editor of the *Northwest Arkansas Times*. Also Geraldine (Gerry) McConnell Hight, mother of my next door friend Aline, and Ethel Smith, my sometimes Sunday school teacher at First Baptist Church in Fayetteville, worked in the office.

Lake Wedington Project Staff

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

Paul Young, the architect for the project and later a well known architect in Fayetteville, told that he, as a young bachelor, was working on the project at Devil's Den, when the money for that project gave out. They were all wondering where they could find jobs when my daddy came down and hired the entire staff, much to their relief.

Hugh Hurd, was a bachelor and needed a place to live. Somehow it was decided that he would rent a room from us in our house at 415 N. Washington Avenue. Hugh was an inveterate tease, and he and Daddy kept things lively with their jokes and high jinks. Although he was only supposed to be a roomer and not a boarder, Hugh ended up eating many a meal with us.

While Hugh was living with us on Washington Avenue he dated the owner of Kurtz-Moore Coffee Shop, which was located on the north side of East Center Street, or Smokey Row, in the middle of the block. She was a very attractive red headed lady whose name was Vera, and I think it was Kurtz-Moore, although it may have been one or the other, but we always called her Mrs. Kurtz-Moore. I adored the carrots she served, and Hugh would often bring me a serving of them when he came home from seeing her, particularly when I had scarlet fever. He did not marry her, but he ended up actually becoming family when he married Mother's cousin Nora Carl Brumfield, Roy Brumfield's first wife. Mrs. Kurtz-Moore married Herbert Chandler, a Fayetteville real estate agent, and we remained friends until she

Paul Young, architect for the Lake Wedington project, ca. 1930

Photo courtesy Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

died, and I never forgot how good her carrots were and she never forgot how much I liked them.

While perhaps not as close as Hugh, the entire staff had a real feeling of camaraderie. Many of the people were long time friends and others became close friends. There were many fun get-togethers of the staff and their families besides the fellowship of working together on a challenging project. No doubt there were the usual personality conflicts and office tensions, but my recollection was that Daddy had the highest regard for the abilities and the dedication of all of these people. I think that this feeling was returned by them to him, but Daddy was a hard taskmaster and perfection was his aim. Sometimes it was hard being his daughter, and I can imagine it may at times have been hard to work for him. But of the staff I knew well, I believe they shared his goals and commitment to high achievement.

When the Administration Building at The Project was completed everybody drove the 15 miles over the dusty gravel road each day to work. I can well remember driving that dusty road many times. The dread was that you would have to follow another car and their dust. In hot weather, the choice was to leave the windows open and choke on dust or close them and suffocate. Either way you would arrive pretty dusty yourself. However, the staff who lived in Fayetteville got to make the trip in high style in the government-owned station wagon. It had real wood sides and was quite elegant. Only in the movies had we ever seen a station wagon, usually being driven by some glamorous star like William Powell. Ada Lee (Smith) Shook tells that their Gunter Street house was the last stop on the carpool run, so her daddy, Carl, got to bring it home every night. Parked in front of their house, it caused quite a sensation in the neighborhood, as neighbors came to examine and admire the glamorous vehicle. In that day and time there were many families that did not own a car, much less a station wagon.

As far as the project's effect on my life it was minimal at first except that new people came into our lives. Among these was Betty Dean Scoggins, the daughter of Ray and Dean Scoggins who moved to Fayetteville from Decatur when Ray was hired by my daddy. They lived in an apartment in the big house on the northwest corner of Walnut and Lafayette streets. Like so many owners of the big houses, the widow, Mrs. Tunstill, who lived there, had made an apartment in it. Betty Dean

was so little and cute although we were almost the same age. I was always tall for my age, and we must have made a picture of contrasts, but nevertheless we became great friends and remained so for years to come. Ray's father, known as Papa Scoggins by the family, was a fire and brimstone Baptist preacher in Decatur, who some years before had played a major role in the Sugg family being Methodists. When my father-in-law Ed Sugg moved from Decatur to Lanagan, Missouri he joined the Methodist Church, either because there was no Baptist church there or all the young people in town went to the Methodist Church; the family stories differ on this detail. At any rate when he wrote back to get his letter from the Baptist Church he was shocked to receive the following reply from Papa Scoggins: "Dear Ed, Sorry to learn that you are going straight to Hell."

Chester Spies, *left*, and C.B. Wiggans, ca. 1938

Photo courtesy of the author

One time the office staff went to Mary Maestri's for dinner. We went to their original farm house out from Tontitown where everyone entered through the kitchen. Their traditional menu of soup, salad, fried chicken, spaghetti, rolls, spumoni, and a glass of wine was served and all for 75 cents. As he did for years to come, "Daddy" Maestri regaled us with stories as Mary cooked and served the delicious food.

Another time the crew had a picnic at the lake. I don't recall the rest of the menu, but I do remember Mrs. Scoggins' doughnuts. Ray's wife, Dean, was famous for her homemade doughnuts, and as a friend of their daughter, Betty Dean, I had often been privileged to partake of them, but they had never tasted as good as they did that autumn day out of the open. The men set up an andiron to swing a huge iron kettle over one of the fireplaces in the picnic area by the Lodge. With a roaring fire going and the kettle full of bubbling grease, she began cooking doughnuts in the early afternoon. Many were eagerly consumed while still hot and fresh from the kettle. There must have been hundreds of doughnuts cooked that day, and every last one was eaten with relish. To this day I can see Mrs. Scoggins sitting by that iron kettle frying doughnuts, and I can even get a whiff of that heavenly aroma.

Another group of people who came into our lives was the "big wigs", as Mother and Daddy called them. They were the government supervisors who came from out of town, and Mother always expected them to be people of great importance, and she would be "in a tizzy" when Daddy would bring them home for dinner. Of course most of them turned out to be folks just like us, family men, out on the road, lonesome for their families and grateful for a home cooked meal. Before the evening was over most would be down on the floor playing with me. One in particular that we all adored was named Buffalo. That was his last name and everyone called him that; I have no idea what his first name was, although he remained a fast friend for years to come. Daddy had the questionable habit of teaching me to tell jokes and perform them for guests. Under Mother's watchful ear, they were all "clean" jokes, although Daddy himself enjoyed a good "dirty" joke. There was one joke I loved to tell about a traveling salesman who was directed by the farmer to take a shortcut across a field occupied by a ferocious looking bull. When the salesman showed understandable reticence the farmer assured him that the bull was very tame and would harm him in no way, to which the salesman replied, "You know it and I know it, but does the bull know it?" I had a manner of drawing the buuuullllll word out interminably, and Buffalo found this particularly funny. He sent me a rubber depiction of Walt Disney's Ferdinand the Bull when the movie came out, and I still have it although it is a little worse for wear.

Once Daddy called at the last minute to tell Mother he was bringing someone home for dinner. She was caught with only three pork chops,

no car to go to the store, and apparently our next door neighbor, Mr. Winchester was not available for quick delivery from his grocery store on Dickson Street. So she cut a piece of bread in a pork chop shape, breaded and fried all four "pork chops". Her intention was that she would take the bogus pork chop, but Daddy declared to his dying day that he got it. He really did deserve it.

Another time, Daddy and the guest walked into the kitchen just as Mother opened the refrigerator and a lemon meringue pie slid into the floor. That was bad enough but our roomer Hugh was standing beside the fridge visiting with her when it all happened, and there the two of them stood looking very sheepish with the pie on the floor between them. That was one of those occasions that the more you try to explain the worse it gets.

One of the first tasks at hand was the acquisition of the 18,000 acres which was to make up The Project. Mr. Jim Farley from Siloam Springs, who was the father of Fern (Mrs. Dick) Pratt, was the ideal choice to help with this endeavor. He lived close to the Washington – Benton County line and knew people all over. He was a longtime Justice of the Peace, and in those days JPs handled a myriad of court duties. He was a

Scene in the original project purchase area.

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

remarkable choice to deal with the owners of the land to be acquired. So he and Daddy set about the task of convincing the owners to sell, buying the land and helping the people to relocate to better farms if they so desired.

When the land was all purchased and construction actually begun it still held little interest for me. But The Project was stimulating interest in all the surrounding communities as far away as Siloam Springs and Winslow. When I lived in Siloam in the early '50s, I was constantly meeting people whose husbands, fathers, sons, or they themselves had worked on the construction. This made it graphically clear to me what an economic impact it had on the entire area. I have been told that they would bring truck loads of men from all over and that as many as 500 were employed at one time. One such was Elmer Griffith, who years later married Dottie Parks, widow of our cousin Lloyd Parks. Elmer related that since he owned a truck he was hired to transport workers each workday back and forth from Winslow.

Although The Project was under the auspices of one or another of the New Deal agencies, finally ending up with the Soil Conservation Service, all of the construction labor was supplied by the WPA. The letters stood for Workers Project Administration or Workers Progress Administration depending on what time frame is used. The staff was not WPA, as they were hired and paid by the Soil Conservation Service. The people who owned or leased the land purchased for The Project were given first chance at the jobs. During this period jokes about the lack of a good work ethic by WPA workers were popular. But the hundreds of men who worked this job were skillful, hardworking, conscientious, and rightfully proud of their work.

The land purchase and subsequent construction took all of three years to complete. My interest perked up when the prospect of an actual lake in which we could swim and boat began to become reality. There were those in Fayetteville, and I am sure other surrounding communities, who showed much skepticism that the lake would actually fill with water. It was known as "Wiggans' Hole" among such doubters, Glen Rose being one of the most vocal. Glen was the longtime U of A basketball coach, and I believe that he and Daddy had come on the University staff about the same time. In fact I am pretty sure they both roomed at Mrs. Cornett's Boarding House. In later years I asked Glen about it, but he could not remember. But in the 1927-28 Polk's Directory for Fayetteville Daddy is

listed as "Wiggans, Clifford B. instructor U. of A., rooms 234 N. Ozark". This address is listed to A.D. McNair, professor U. of A., so I don't know where Mrs. Cornett came in. I do know she was not Golda Cornett who was a friend later on, and I also know that Daddy and the other bachelors who roomed there kept things very lively with their practical jokes.

Back to Wiggans Hole, it was a glorious day when the lake did actually fill with clear pure spring water just as planned. Glen and the other doubters had to eat crow, and my Daddy never forgot it either. Those who were there tell me that a big rain came, and the lake filled overnight. That seems incredible, but that's their story, and I do know that it made the headlines on the front page of the *Northwest Arkansas Times*. Daddy had commissioned Mrs. Kendall Mayes, whose husband worked on the project, and they lived in a house right by the dam, to watch for the first water to come over the spillway and to let him know immediately. So

Construction on the earthen dam, which created Lake Wedington, ca. 1937

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

when on a cold February day in 1938 she spotted the first water she stood her two little boys, Donald and Larry, in front of the cascading water and documented the event by taking their picture. She presented this picture to me in 1988 when Friends of Lake Wedington held a meeting to which we invited anyone who had any part in the building of The Project to come and share their memories.

Another person who came to that meeting was Slim Swope, who had been a young muleskinner on the project. I did not remember him at all from that time, as there were as many as 500 men working at various times, but I did vaguely remember an incident he recounted for us. One day the foreman asked him to drive a truck to the Fayetteville railroad station to pick up the huge steel pins to be used in the dam. The only way in which they could be loaded because of their length was to tie them to both sides of the truck. He actually had to get into the truck before they were fastened to the driver's side, which in effect pinned him in the truck. On the return trip, as he was descending the hill down into the river valley, the brakes gave way and he came down the hill at breakneck speed. It

House where the Wiggans Family lived during their time at Lake Wedington, ca. 1938.

Photo courtesy of the author

Officials at Lake Wedington Dedication Day

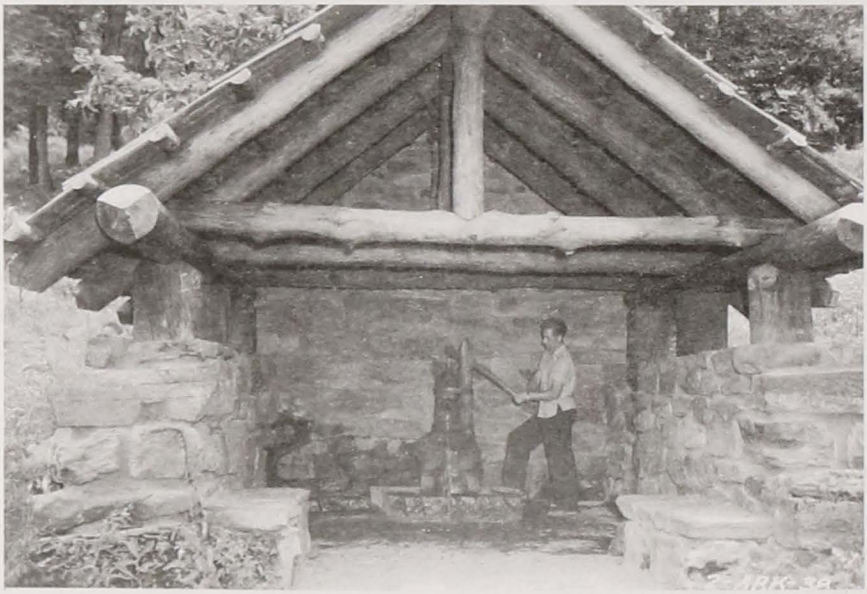
Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

was all he could do to keep the truck on the road, and he said he was just trying to keep all four wheels on the ground. Just then my Daddy, driving the brand new government station wagon, started up the hill. Slim said he managed to avoid a head on collision, but did nip the back fender. He could not get the truck stopped until he had made the next corner and gone clear across the river. By that time my Daddy had turned around and roared up to him where he was trapped in the truck by steel pins. Daddy yelled, "You're fired!" With that Slim took off and drove on to the shop. When he arrived the foreman told him to take the truck around to the back, but Slim said, "I can't; I'm fired." Just then Daddy arrived, and stated, "He's a liar; he's not fired". I guess by that time Daddy had reflected on the incident, and realized what had happened. I remember Daddy coming home and relating the incident, but I had forgotten all about it until Slim told his story. By both accounts they were both plenty scared.

Slim also told Friends of Lake Wedington Board Member, John Cochran, but did not tell it when I was present, that the workers had nicknames for all of the supervisory personnel, and that my Daddy's was "Wiggle Bottom". I can just see Daddy jumping around from one task to another just like he did for all his life. Marjorie Luttrell (Hart) whose Daddy also worked out there confirmed the nickname custom, and said she never knew any of their names because her Daddy always referred to them by their nicknames. The only one she could remember was "Jelly Belly", and that could have fit several of the men.

On April 24, 1938, the dedication of the lake was held. It was a very important occasion with hundreds of people thronging in. There was, of course, the usual quota of important people, local, state, and national along with the expected speeches, which, as a child, I found all too boring. But my interest was beginning to perk up now that the prospect of being able to swim and boat was soon to be a reality.

Soon afterward we moved into the beautiful lakeside residence which was the first new house we had ever lived in. In fact it was one of the few that I had ever seen. New houses were rarities in those Depression days. The floors were shining hardwood and the ceilings were beamed and vaulted. All the walls were solid pine paneling. They purchased lovely block print linen for the draperies in both the house and the rental cabins on the hill. Mother made the curtains for our house, but they probably hired someone to do the others. Our antique furniture plus some beautiful



Well house, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

pieces that Daddy had made and the braided rugs Grandmother Wiggans made looked great in the house. There were two large native stone fireplaces, one in the living room and one in the master bedroom. Unfortunately, that was the only heat the house had. In the winter we had to put up a woodstove right in front of the living room fireplace to keep from freezing to death. It just did not measure up to our floor furnace in the house on Washington Avenue. The house really looked nice except for the wood stove.

Having lived most all of my eight years on Washington Avenue with little girl friends on every side within a few blocks I had always had someone to play with despite being an only child. But now I found myself separated from all my playmates by 15 long dusty miles. So out of necessity I learned a lifelong skill: how to entertain myself. My doll house that Daddy built, my paper dolls, and books largely took the place of little girl friends. There was no TV either, just our good friend the radio.

Besides this, I also learned a new appreciation and acceptance of nature. The house was right at lakeside with woods on either side so that

wildlife was all around us. We even had a "pet" snake. A king snake took a liking to sunning himself every afternoon on our rock patio. He didn't mind sharing the patio with us, nor we with him. Of course king snakes are desirable, as they eat mice, rats, and even other snakes. They are not poisonous either.

Once the men found a king snake in the act of swallowing one snake while holding a second snake captive wrapped in its tail to consume later. They put all three in the bed of a pickup and brought them in for everyone to see. The length of the two victim snakes exceeded the length of their captor, but he persevered and finished them both off although it took several hours.

Daddy always said that in all his years working around The Project there were only two or three definitely identified copperheads. This easy acceptance of snakes as part of nature has helped me retain a healthy attitude toward the critters. I respect them, but they don't make me hysterical.

Another form of wild life which resided on our patio was a large colony of dirt daubers. We soon learned to tell the difference between a stinging wasp and a harmless dirt dauber. In fact, I became so friendly with them that they would allow me to pick them up and play with them. I well remember "grossing out" my slightly older cousin George Anna Hurst with this brazen act. It was a great moment of triumph for me, because she and the older kids in the Washington Avenue neighborhood had scared me with ghost stories and other atrocities often enough.

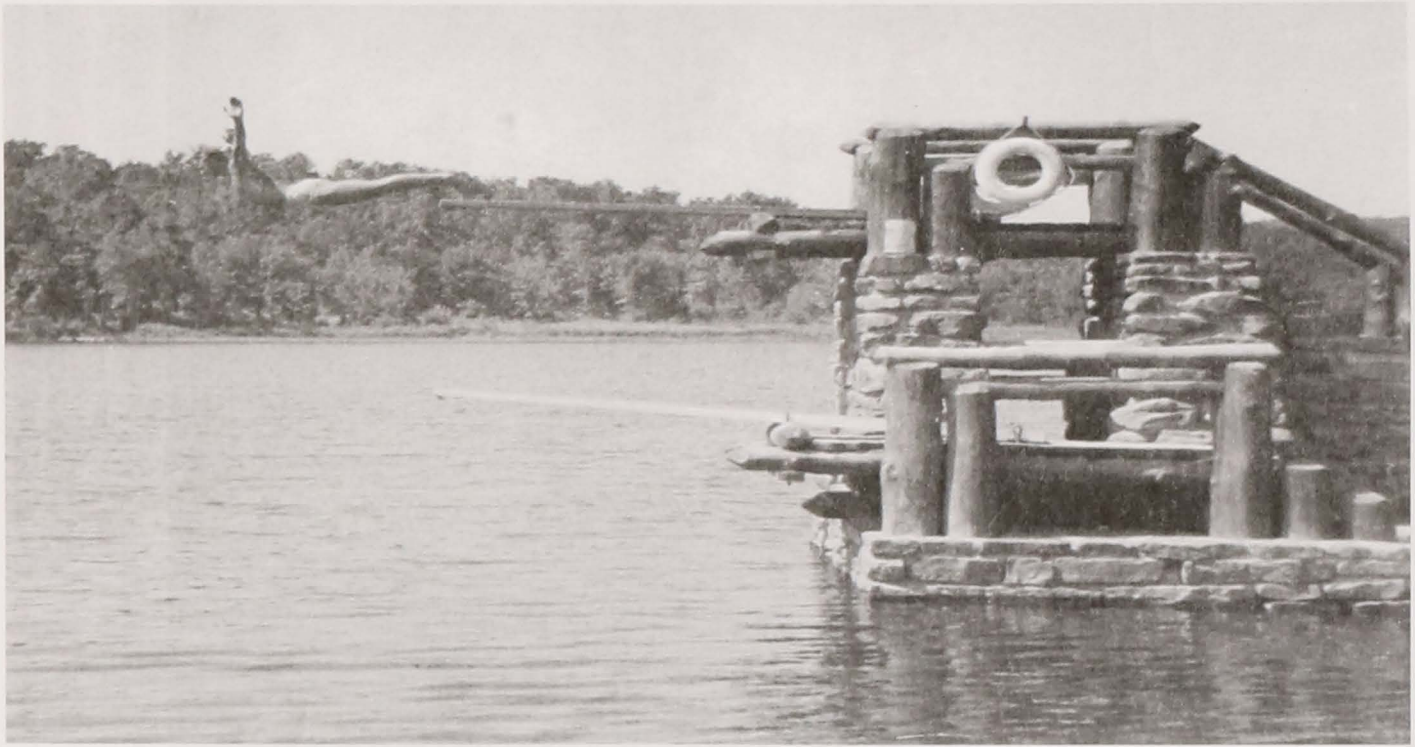
There were lots of times when we would find baby rabbits abandoned in a storm and bring them in the house until the storm passed. Quail, squirrels, possum, deer, even foxes were frequent visitors in our yard.

One thing we didn't see was elk. At one point the government brought in several dozen elk and turned them loose on The Project in an attempt to inhabit the area. They were never seen again. I remember once we became very excited when we thought maybe we saw one on a hill some way off the road, but that was the closest sighting to be had.

Around the boat dock was a favorite place for fish to assemble, because it provided them safe haven, as no fishing was allowed off the dock. A number of large bass and catfish swam there regularly, and it became a favorite pastime to feed the fish by throwing bread crumbs to them.

The diving board platform at Lake Wedington begins to take shape, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries



A diver tries out the new diving platform at Lake Wedington, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

There was one giant catfish who was a regular, and he acquired the name of Oscar. Oscar was a favorite of all the staff and regular visitors. He became so tame I think he would have let us pick him up. The story goes that long after we had left the lake, someone had the temerity to catch Oscar and actually keep him! Probably ate him too! I feel sure that Oscar is in Catfish Heaven and his captor is in the other place.

This was my first experience with a real country party line telephone. We had crank telephones which you cranked to call either the operator or someone else on your line. The number and length of the cranks indicated who was being called. Whenever anyone of the 15 or so on the line received a call everybody heard the ring, but you only answered when it was your ring, at least in theory.

The youth camp called Camp in the Pines was developed in the northwest corner of The Project area and was used by both Boy and Girl Scouts. It consisted of eight or ten little screened-in cabins which slept six or eight, a dining hall, and latrine. I attended camp there several times from Brownie through Intermediate Scout age. I think the camp must have fallen victim to World War II and was more or less abandoned. The buildings were either burned or sold and hauled off. All that remains are the foundations.

Construction of the youth camp at Lake Wedington, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

Boaters and swimmers enjoy Lake Wedington, ca. 1939

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

With the construction complete, many of the workmen and staff had to be laid off. But a new crew was hired to run the recreational facility. Some of the originals stayed on: Wayne Smith, Kendall Mayes, and "Chicken" Ricketts. These all lived on The Project in some of the old farmhouses that had been retained. So we had some people living on The Project with us, but they were all miles away from our house.

Life guards were an addition, and the first year they were "Boots" Clark, a Fayetteville High School football star, Ted Rosen, and Bob Kerr, both sons of U of A professors. There was at least one life guard on duty at all daylight times. Living, working, and playing together as we did, we all felt like family and the lifeguards were like mischievous older brothers to me.

Mother had a hard time keeping food in the house with hungry boys always around. They felt welcome to help themselves if we weren't there. Once we were gone all day, and they raided the refrigerator but were thwarted in getting homemade ice cream. We had a little freezer that worked inside the refrigerator, and it was there full of ice cream. But there was a trick to getting the lid off, and the boys tried everything, including brute force, but all to no avail. The trick was to turn the lid the opposite way and did they feel foolish when they found out how easy it was.

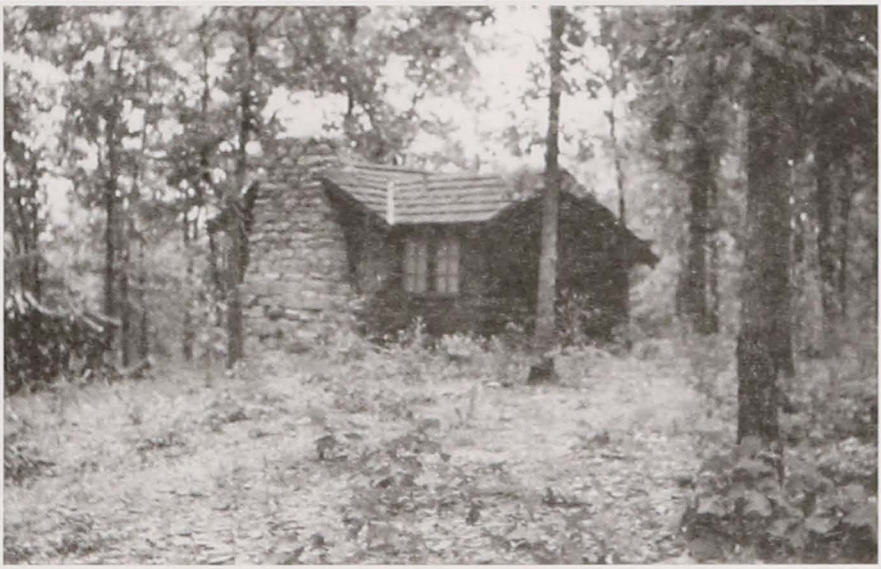
The beach and swimming area the life guards presided over was a delight. Tons of sand had been hauled in and spread over the area to a depth of ten to twelve inches. The distinctive native stone diving board, with both a high and low board, was much in use, usually by daring young swains to the delight of their admiring girlfriends. There was a raft which floated 35 to 40 feet beyond the roped off shallow area. It was always fun to swim out to the raft and sit and sun on it.

Once on a weekday morning, Mother and I were the only swimmers there. The life guard on duty, Mother, and I all swam to the raft. I went back to shore for something, and when swimming back to the raft, I began to get in trouble. All I would have had to do was to call out, and I could have been professionally rescued, but I was too embarrassed to do that. But after that I was all too aware of how it was possible for even a good swimmer to drown. Years later I lost a turquoise ring my boyfriend had given to me into the deep water by the raft. So I have these two unhappy memories of the raft along with many happy memories of it.

Those not here at that time need to imagine the novelty of having a lake, where none had been, with all of its beauty and recreational opportunities. There were many people who drove miles just to come and look. The snapshots of that era show dozens of people dressed more appropriately for church than for picnicking. The men would be in shirts and ties and of course hats; the women in print dresses, hose, high heel shoes and often hats.

Of course there was at least an equal number who dressed more appropriately for the many activities available. On the lake itself, besides swimming, were row boats for rent and fishing of course. Quite a few people brought their own boats and used them not only for fishing and joy riding, but also for surf boarding. This must have been the forerunner of water skiing that is done today. Standing on a board about 24" by 16", the rider was pulled behind a motor boat. The size may be way off; it has been 50 years since I last saw one.

Available to patrol the lake was a good sized inboard motor boat, which like the row boats, had been skillfully fashioned by the carpentry crew. They installed a Ford Model A engine in it to provide the power. No doubt it was the biggest and most powerful boat that most of the people who came to the lake in those days had ever seen.



One of the cabins at Lake Wedington, ca. 1938

Photo courtesy Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

There was a fatal boat accident while we lived there. A man and his wife and young son were in their boat when the outboard motor malfunctioned. The man got into the water and attempted to repair it. Somehow the motor was turned on, and he caught his head on the propeller.

The life guards went to the rescue and brought him to shore. I believe they took him to the hospital in Fayetteville in the station wagon, but he died that night. I can vividly recall the man being carried in. The nervous and worried people standing around trying to reassure each other that he was not seriously hurt, although we knew in our hearts that he was. The anguish of his wife and the bewilderment of his young son.

The life guards pulled several swimmers to safety, and we were always amazed at their ability to spot someone in trouble among hundreds of swimmers. There was a lifeguard tower facing the swimming area on the end toward the diving board. During the weekend swimming hours there was always a life guard on the tower, and I can remember a number of times when the guard would quickly descend, run to the water, and go to the rescue of someone he had spotted in trouble. There have been several

people drown in the lake, but I do not believe any did during the time we lived there and when my daddy was associated with The Project.

The lifeguards, besides being intrepid in their duties, were fun loving, sweet, conscientious young men and handsome too. With their muscular bronzed bodies they must have made many a bathing beauty's hear flutter. As an eight year old girl, I viewed them as nothing less than Greek gods.

Swimmers had to pay to swim, probably a whole 10 cents. After paying you received a metal mesh basket for your clothes and a numbered rubber bracelet, red for males, blue for females, to wear on your wrist or ankle to show that you had paid. The basket with your clothes was turned in at the check-in window for safe keeping while you swam. The numbered bracelets were also used to keep track of how many people were in the lake and also whether they all got out of the lake at the end of the day. If any bracelets were missing and baskets of clothes unclaimed it was cause for alarm.

One sunny Sunday afternoon in March or April of 1939, Mother and I walked over to the swimming area. It was one of those first really warm days in early Spring which feels so good after the chill of winter. I was wearing a print rayon taffeta Sunday School dress with short, puffed sleeves, and the sun felt hot on my bare arms. As we stood on the dock, I gazed into the clear blue water, and it looked so inviting. I said longingly, "I wish I could go swimming." Much to my surprise, Mother said, "Go ahead and jump in!" I excitedly threw off my socks and patent leather Mary Jane shoes and jumped into the water, Sunday School dress and all. Of course the water was not half as warm as it looked, and I didn't stay in very long. But of all my many swims in Lake Wedington, I will never forget the thrill of that first swim of the summer of 1939 in my taffeta Sunday School dress.

Although there were people hired to man the bathhouse, sometimes Mother and Daddy would have to pitch in and help out. I can remember one time we were in the check in area when a young man appeared in the hallway leading to the men's dressing room completely in the buff. My daddy's yell of reproach could have been heard clear across the lake. In fact I think the usually non-swearing man may have said, "Get the Hell back in there!" The young "streaker" promptly followed Daddy's instructions. The vociferous admonition must have frightened him as much as it did me.

Soon after we moved to the lake Daddy began a special woodworking project in his spare time. He undertook to build a sailboat. I don't remember how many weeks or months the project took, but I do remember many a time when one of the narrow boards he had to bend to form the sny (curve of the boat) would break. He didn't curse out loud, but the frustration was obvious. Mother sewed the heavy sail cloth to fashion the sail on her Singer sewing machine, and she always declared that it ruined the machine. So she had her frustrations too, but she did use that same sewing machine for the rest of her life, exactly 50 years.

All frustrations aside, it was a proud day when the boat finally went into the water. I think we even christened it with a bottle of something, non-alcoholic, I'm sure. The boat did float, and when there was enough wind, we had lots of fun in it. It was really something of a novelty in this area, as there had never before been a body of water large enough for sailing. I think it was the only sailboat on the lake for many years.

Once we were out in the boat when some friends came up in a canoe and asked if they could take a ride in the sailboat. It was decided that they would take our place in the sailboat, and Mother and I would take their canoe to shore. We traded places and Daddy happily sailed away to show off his boat. It was our first time ever in a canoe, and we were very fortunate to make it to shore without capsizing. That was mother's last time in a canoe and mine for 30 years or more.

Among the many groups using the area were groups of UA students and faculty. Once when a frat was having a picnic there, one of the Washington "Bigwigs" happened to be in town. We were showing him around when we came upon this happy group in Chinquapin Hollow. It was after dark, and the young people were clustered around campfires. The "Bigwig" started snapping pictures using his flash attachment. After taking only 3 or 4, he was accosted by the indignant blue-haired housemother who forbade him to take pictures of "her boys."

The reason she gave was that one time pictures had been made of one of the frat parties, and "things showed up (in the prints) that weren't really there!" So the man clicked something on the camera to reassure her that the photos had been destroyed. Actually his action did nothing to the film, and we had some good pictures of the group. We never knew if any things showed up that "weren't really there", but if they did they were not incriminating, at least by our standards. Had the housemother seen them

she might have judged differently. Coincidentally, Miriam Rosen (Enfield), sister of lifeguard, Ted, is shown in one of the pictures.

The Chinquapin Hollow picnic area was a favorite spot for large group picnics as well as family groups. There was a lovely covered pavilion with a fireplace as well as individual barbecue pits and drinking fountains. Although I can't remember what the group was, maybe the Arkansas Western Gas Company annual picnic. I do remember attending a picnic there where chickens were barbecued over the fireplace grill. Basted with pure butter and cooked and eaten the open air, they were delicious!

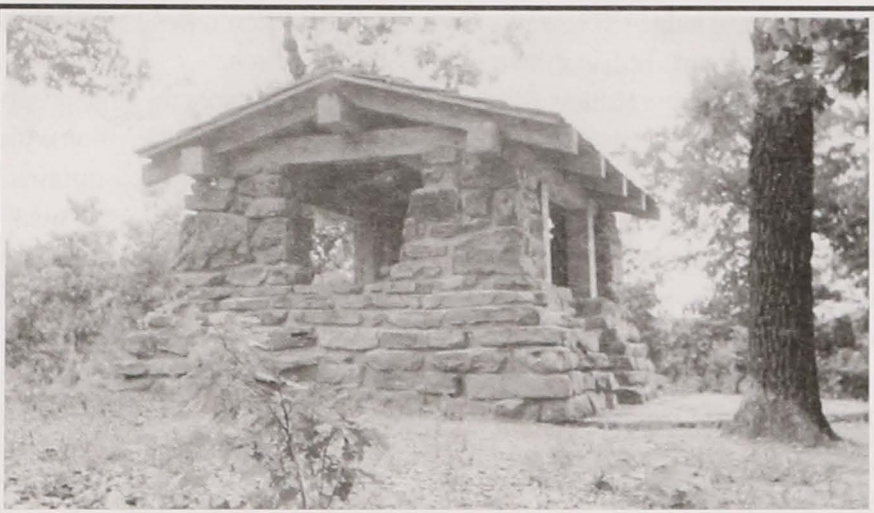
Mother was working as librarian of the Washington County Library (forerunner of Ozark Regional Library) when we moved to the Lake. The first year we lived there, Mother drove me into Fayetteville everyday to Mrs. Campbell's School. But the year of 1939 it was decided that I would attend the one-room Howe-Savoy School (now the Howe-Savoy Church) on Highway 16 toward Fayetteville. All 8 grades were taught by young Roy Snodgrass who was not much older or bigger than some of the eighth grade boys. He certainly had his hands full!

The room was heated by the proverbial potbelly wood stove in the center of the room, and I suppose building the fire was part of Roy's job. The bathroom facilities were two outhouses behind the school. Each girl's trip to the outhouse was accompanied by howls and jeers from the boys. It is a wonder I did not ruin my kidneys because I did not have the nerve to make very many such embarrassing trips.

There were two other "city kids" attending the school that year, named Albert and Valesca Buckholtz. Their father, Bill, had been successful enough in insurance in Oklahoma City that he had been able to retire at a very young age. He bought the farm in the curve of Highway 16 just east of the Illinois River beside the bridge. Our families became fast friends, and we shared many fun times together.

The farm house on their place did not have running water when they first came, necessitating bathing in a washtub in the kitchen. One time, Mrs. Buckholtz, whom they all called "Mama," was taking her bath when Albert took her picture. Things were always lively at the Buckholtz house.

They raised corn on the farm, and I can remember many sumptuous corn roasts at the lake with good fresh sweet corn from their fields. W also shared the Pie Suppers, Box Suppers, and other events held at the



Shelter overlooking Lake Wedington, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

school. I remember being coyly shy when Albert and I had to share a box dinner. Of course the grown-ups had arranged it all.

A year was enough of the bucolic pastoral life for the Buckholtz family, and they sold the farm and moved back to Oklahoma City. Bill went back to work in insurance, and they all resumed their city way of life. When "Mama" wrote a few years later that Valesca was making her debut, I could not help but contrast that to their days of bathing in a washtub in the farmhouse.

Whenever I drive to the Lake from Fayetteville and pass the towering pines that I remember as seedlings, I am all too aware of the passage of time. Guarding those seedlings, as well as the mature trees, from fire was and still is a constant need. There were many times when all the men of the place would be out fighting fires all night long. The women would carry water and food to them.

One such night Mother and I made an unscheduled visit to the scene of the fire. All of the men were out, and of course, our house was far from any others. We heard an unexplained noise which sounded exactly like someone walking up on our patio. No one knocked or called out. We did not know what to think, but being scaredy cats of the first magnitude, we decided we could not stay there alone. How we summoned the courage

to go out and get in the car I don't know, but we drove to the fire scene and waited until Daddy could come home.

There were many interesting people who were regular visitors to the lake. People came from as far away as Texas to stay in the cabins and enjoy the lake. Some would stay for a month or longer at a time and return year after year. On Sundays people would drive in for the day from all the surrounding towns including Tulsa.

One such regular visitor was Leon McAullife, who, at that time, was the steel guitar player with Bob Will's Texas Playboy Band of "Take it away, Leon!" fame. The handsome young bachelor was courting a beautiful young woman named Lucille who was soon to be his wife. They came almost every Sunday that summer, and we all got to know them well.

Once when they came there was a "Bigwig" there with his mischievous camera. Leon and Lucille were alone in the lake, and he had lifted her up on one of the stone pillars that held the chain marking the shallow area. That day the sylph-like Lucille was wearing a pale yellow skin tight swim suit. She looked gorgeous perched on that pillar with Leon in the water looking up at her, no doubt pleading his case for marriage. Later Leon had his own band, and years later John and I went to hear him in Las Vegas. He came down and sat with us and we reminisced.

The "Bigwig" gazed out the bathhouse door, enjoying the scene when an idea struck him. He mused that he had a filter for the camera he was sure would fade the pale yellow of Lucille's swim suit right out of the picture. If the filter worked I never got to see the picture, but if it did it would have been a time when something did not show in a picture that was there – the reverse of the housemother's fears.

A unique use of the lake came one winter, probably 1940. We had a prolonged cold spell, and it was determined that the lake was frozen sufficiently that it was safe to go out onto the ice. The word spread, and on Sunday afternoon people flocked out from town to play on the ice. There were only a few who had ice skates: Dr. and Mrs. Marinus Kik, originally from Holland, and their daughter, Katherine or Katerina, as Mrs. Kik called her, and Charles and Pearl Clinehens that I remember. The rest of us, young and old alike, just frolicked on the ice, and it was so much fun.

By the early 1940s, Daddy's work as Project Manager was phasing out. The government decided to lease out the recreation area to a

Children take advantage of a frozen Lake Wedington, ca. 1940
Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

concessionaire, Dr. Benjamin Ward, an optometrist from Prairie Grove. We moved back to Washington Avenue and our floor furnace. Daddy continued for a year or so overseeing The Project and then he transferred to another phase of Soil Conservation Service work.

In only a few years almost all of the young men of the Lake Wedington Project would be fighting in World War II. Two of the original life guards, Ted Rosen and Bob Kerr never came back.

For years I thought that Boots Clark had also been killed, but a few years ago, much to my joy, his daughter contacted me. In fact he had moved to California, married and had a family. What a happy ending that was.

With war, some of the New Deal Agencies were abolished for the war effort, and Daddy's was one of those. So he had to find another job, necessitating us leaving Fayetteville. Another effect of the War was that people couldn't use their precious gasoline ration on frivolous driving so that the lake was almost deserted because of the war conditions.

Daddy's sailboat which we had left moored in the lake out from the boat dock was another victim of the war. We got word that if we didn't take it out it would be sunk. Being hundreds of miles away there was nothing we could do but let it be sunk. I hope it was done with dignity. At

least that beautiful handmade boat rests peacefully in the waters of the only home she ever knew.

After the war, we moved back to Fayetteville, and along with everyone else in the area, began to go to the lake again. By this time I was a teenager and went with friends more than family. Every summer my girl friends would have a house party in one of more of the cabins. Many of our happiest and funniest memories are of those days. One less than happy time was when I overdid the sunbathing and suffered a sunstroke and severe sunburn.

When I was a junior in high school our class picnic was planned for Lake Wedington. When the school buses loaded with boisterous teenagers approached the Illinois River bridge, we were met by floodwaters, a common occurrence in those days. There was nothing to do but turn back. The bewildered bus drivers and chaperones took us back to school where it was decided to take us to another spot. So that was one picnic that Wedington missed out on.

College days found us there with groups large and small. When the Chicken of Tomorrow Contest was held in Fayetteville in 1951, the finale was a picnic for the Exhibitors and officials, with barbecued chicken of course, at Lake Wedington. I got the honor of driving the "biggest chicken producer in Maine" Henry Sagglio, to the picnic. UA students of the Animal Industry Club led by President Don Tyson barbecued the chickens over huge pits which they constructed just for that purpose.

After I was married and had children we still went to the lake, and it became a favorite spot for the children. Sometimes the two with summer birthdays would choose to celebrate them at the lake. I remember well one really fun Jaycee picnic at the lake, without children, which was climaxed with a dance in the Lodge. No air conditioning, of course, but we were accustomed to that as we did not have it at home in those days either.

Once when we were at the lake with the children, I took them to see the house where we had lived. The people living there invited us in, and I was amazed to see how little the house had changed. Of course it was a lot smaller than I remembered.

Even after Beaver Lake arrived people still loved and used Lake Wedington. Each time we went I was surprised at how many people would be there. It is a more personal, cozier spot and many people have fond memories just as I do.

As the years went by, our children grew up and family picnics became infrequent. By early 1988 it had been years since I had been to Lake Wedington, but I had occasion to call the concessionaire to inquire about holding an event there. David Bassett, of the B & B Barbecue Bassett Family, was concessionaire. I mentioned my early involvement prompting him to tell me that the Forest Service was planning to tear down the now abandoned cabins on the hill overlooking the lake.

A few days later Dave and Lavon Smith, Wayne's younger brother, showed them to me. Later I wrote of that visit, "A few months ago when Lavon Smith took me to see the cabins on the hill overlooking the lake I was overcome with emotion. Even though they have been unused and largely untouched for years, they still stand as a monument to the skill and dedication of the men who toiled with their hands and hearts to build this project. To the hand hewn wood, to the still, sturdy beautiful stonework, to the hand forged hardware, each little cabin with its unique design stands as an exquisite memorial to each of the more than 500 men and women who shared in this endeavor."

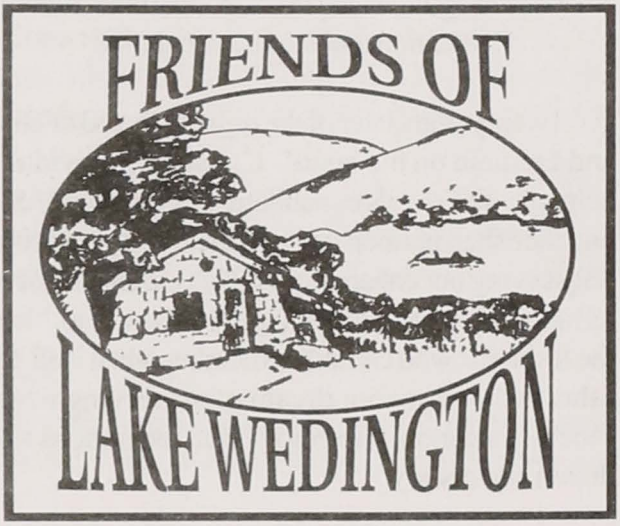
Toilet Building, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

That visit spurred Dave and me to organize Friends of Lake Wedington with the mission of saving the cabins on the hill.

The Friends of Lake Wedington organization was formed in 1988 by a small group of people concerned that the historic structures at the 1930s Lake Wedington project had fallen into disrepair and the six cabins on the hill above the lake were scheduled for demolition by the U. S. Forest Service. Subsequently Friends established a liaison with the Forest Service to work together to restore the cabins and put them back into use. This was accomplished by a combination of U. S. Forest Service Challenge Cost Share Funds and private matching donations of money, material and volunteer labor. In the course of planning the cabin restoration, the group became concerned about making them accessible to the physically challenged while still retaining the historical integrity of the structures. It was possible to make three of the six cabins "wheelchair friendly". Subsequently the restoration project grew to include not only the six cabins, but also to restore and make accessible the other structures and facilities of the recreation area. This has resulted in varying degrees of restoration on almost all of the historic structures and the construction of an accessible picnic pavilion, ramp into the swimming area, nature trail, and fishing pier. Ongoing projects and planned future projects are in place for all of the partially restored structures as well as continuing maintenance by Friends volunteers.

During the years, the Friends and groups working with the organization have contributed thousands of hours of volunteer labor. These groups include Work Release Participants of the Washington County Sheriff's Office, Peace Corp Returnees, Boy Scouts of America, Alpha Phi Omega of



the University of Arkansas (scouting fraternity), as well as other U of A students, faculty, and classes, Southwestern Bell Telephone Pioneers, Elderhostel groups, various businesses and individual skilled workers, and a loyal group of Friends members, some of whom work one day a week almost year round.

Other accomplishments, attained in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, included:

- Listing of all the historic buildings and furnishings on the National Register of Historic Places
- Distribution to all the schools in Northwest Arkansas of a Newspapers in Education publication telling the story of Lake Wedington, Friends, and the Forest Service
- Exhibit on the history of the Wedington Project at Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, and the subsequent establishment of a museum at Lake Wedington using the Shiloh exhibit items along with additional artifacts
- Compilation of the history of the Wedington Project including interviews with individuals who worked on the project, photographs of the construction and development, and brief histories written by several members of Friends
- Award of prestigious Henry Award for Volunteerism presented by the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism 1997
- Designated as 1991 Group of the Year by the Arkansas Recreation and Parks Association

Twenty years later of the original Board of Directors only Cal Johnson and I remain on the board. Countless individuals and businesses have helped with Friends expanded mission. The U.S. Forest Service became our cherished partner, and together we have accomplished miracles in not only saving but enhancing the historic site. That is another story I hope to tell soon. After our founding in 1988 I wrote, "It is so touching to me that the few of us who can still remember when it all began are being joined by others who share our dream of preserving what has been built so that others can continue to enjoy it for generations to come." That is still my dream and my joy.

"Wiggans' Hole:" History of Lake Wedington

Veronica McGlumphy*

Lake Wedington is a well-known and loved recreational facility west of Fayetteville. In the 1930s, during its conception, the project became known as "Wiggans' Hole"[1] and spanned the years from 1935 through 1938. This project and the building of the dam, lake cabins, bathhouse, administration building and picnic tables, had a major impact on the area of Northwest Arkansas.

The common belief is that Lake Wedington was either a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) project or a Works Progress Administration project (WPA). However, after much research, it seems that neither agency was involved. The original name of the project was LA-AK2, "The Northwest Arkansas, Forestry, Pasture Making, Grazing and Recreational Project,"[2] was originally a Land Utilities Project under the Rural Resettlement Administration[3] (RSA), not a CCC or WPA project. The Rural Resettlement Administration office was renamed the Farm Security Administration in 1937. Eventually, due to the drought brought on by the extremely high temperatures, the hot sun and little rain, the project was handed over to the Soil Conservation Services, which had previously been the Agriculture Adjustment Administration.[4] With all of these changes it is easy to understand the confusion as to what type of government project this had been.

It is also important to understand where and how some of these Administrations came into being. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was very concerned about the conditions of farmers and the Nation during his

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*Veronica McGlumphy received a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Arkansas in 2007. She wrote this history of Lake Wedington as a class project.

tenure as President. He appointed Henry A. Wallace as his Secretary of Agriculture, an office Wallace would hold from 1933 through 1940. Roosevelt and Wallace were determined to preserve the rural way of life, and Wallace "championed a whole host of New Deal programs, such as the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the Rural Electrification Administration, and the Soil Conservation Services."[5] Wallace was also able to transform the Department of Agriculture into one of the most powerful and largest entities in Washington, D.C.. It is largely due to the effort of these two men, that the Northwest Arkansas Forestry and Grazing Project had its beginning.

By 1932 the economy in America had all but collapsed and many Americans were out of work with little hope in the future of any job or prospect for a job. Unfortunately, this included the northwest corner of Arkansas. To make matters worse in the summer of 1934, the farmers who would have otherwise been able to sustain themselves with their land, faced a very hot July, with a scorching sun and little to no rain. Many farmers had no choice but to apply to the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) for emergency relief.[6] In 1936, the summer temperatures were scorching:; in Fayetteville on July 15th it was 106 degrees and on July 18th it was a record breaking 110 degrees.[7] By 1935, the bottom had dropped out of the market for farmers and while "the farmers were a rugged people; the Great Depression had brought hardships that were difficult for even them to bear." With their debts continuing to grow, mortgages becoming overdue, credit drying up and prices for their products falling, farmers faced a bleak future.[8] In April 1935, Roosevelt had combined the Rural Rehabilitation program of the FERA, the Subsistence Homestead program of the PWA (Project Works Administration), and the land policy unit of the AAA (Agricultural Adjustment Act to for the Rural Resettlement Administration.

The "LA-AK2 - The Northwest Arkansas, Forestry, Pasture Making, Grazing and Recreational Project" (hereinafter referred to as "Wiggans' Hole) had its beginnings, at least on paper in April 1935, with work actually beginning in November 1935. Originally, the plan called for approximately 80,000 acres to be encompassed, and the removal of over 3,000 farm families; however, it was scaled down to include a only 18,000 acres, with the removal of only 163 families. In May 1935 the Resettlement Administration accepted the LA-AK2 project near Wedington Gap in

Washington and Benton counties. The project was threefold: (1) transfer farmers from sub-marginal to more productive land, (2) retire sub-marginal land from cultivation to prevent further erosion and deterioration of the environment and (3) develop the vacated land as a natural and scenic area for recreational and educational uses.[9] The government had allotted $175,000 for the land requisition and $345,000 for development of the 18,000 acre project.[10] In 1935 there was no other recreational lake in the area at the time as Beaver Lake was not built until 1963. It is unclear as to whether the lake was included in the original concept, but it was included in the plans in 1936. The lake was created by building a dam across the low valley just 16 miles west of Fayetteville. The 136 families that were displaced, were either resettled on better land and were given long term RA loans.

Professor C.B. Wiggans of the University of Arkansas Horticulture Department was named the project manager in early April 1935.[11] In the beginning, Mr. Wiggans "originally had to keep the plans quiet."[12] and was able to do so for about six or seven months. However, with the conditions as they were in the northwest corner of Arkansas, it was too big of a project to keep quiet for long and word spread quickly. Many people of the area viewed the project as a sign of hope. After several years of drought and the harsh winter of 1935, the Lake Wedington project offered opportunities for farmers and their families. However, while many families saw this as a sign of hope, others viewed the project as an invasion from the federal Government.[13]

Other high-level project personnel included Justice of the Peace Jim Farley, who secured title to the required lands. By 1936, he had acquired over $100,000 for the purchases of 14,000 acres. Mr. Chester Spies, of Winslow, was the overseer of the construction of buildings and the youth camp. Mr. Paul Young, a Fayetteville architect, designed the cabins and all of the buildings. Mr. Williams Smith, an engineer, was in charge of laying out the road (which had to be built into Wiggans' Hole), construction of the 1000 feet long dam and 102 acre lake and finally, Mr. Harry Burkinsha who was in charge or preparing the pasture land.[14]

The farmers displaced by the project were given the first opportunity to go to work for the project.[15] Henry M. Miller, for example, received $468.50 from the sale of his land, less a mortgage of $130.00 thus clearing $338.50 to purchase a new home or use as he wished to best support his

One of the stone culverts built in the Lake Wedington area, ca. 1938
Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

family. Also, from December 1935 until February 1937 he received $564.91 in wages while working on the Wiggans' Hole" project. Ben H. Davidson, "the man with the large family," received $738.56 from the sale of his 56.07 acres, with no indebtedness, and went on to be employed by the project.[16] These two gentlemen and their families were greatly helped by the project. Facing possible foreclosure, being homeless and destitute or just wishing to sell their land to help the project, it was the Wiggans' Hole project that enabled them to support their families.

A letter from the Resettlement Administration, dated December 14, 1936, was sent to eleven individuals "for the purpose of closing your case and delivering your check to you." A post script to the letter noted that the letter was sent to Sam Huckaby, Charlie Cripps, M.C. Hellyer, Earl and Erma Parker, May and Murl Cooper, Sam Bolton, D.E. Church, Thelma Wells, T.C. Carter and wife, I. Carpenter and Virginia Sweeten.[17] In December 1936 to receive a letter like this meant the world to the eleven people who received it. Of the eleven people who received the letter, six men were employed by the project, two were widows (women could not be employed by the project), and the other three moved on to California or moved and found work elsewhere. It is clear that had the "Wiggans'

Hole" project not been started many people/farmers would have gone hungry, and/or lost their homes.

However, the project was not always a positive sign for some of the people of the area. Many farms and homes were in such poor condition that–as the old adage goes–it was "possible to study astronomy through the holes in the roof and geology though the cracks in the floor."[18] That did not mean the farmers wanted to give up their land, their homes, and their existence, regardless of how poor life was. A letter to Mr. Howard Cockrill, Attorney at Law received from Mr. Walter L. Combs; Curative Attorney dated June 16, 1936 regarding tracts 543 and 046 makes it quite clear that at least one person did not wish to give up his land:

> In regard to Tract No. 846, I believe your client will have to institute action regardless of whether this land is required by the government. I have talked to Mr. Wiggans, Project Manager, and he is of the same opinion as Mr. Vaughan in regard to condemnation, therefore, my recommendations will have to be as held by Mr. Vaughan. I known from personal investigation that Mr. Haddock will never give this land up until it is taken from him by law, if that is possible.[19]

It is very obvious from this letter that Mr. Haddock did not want to relinquish his land. However, in the end, the Government prevailed and his land was taken for the Wiggans' Hole project, and he never went to work for the project.

Another property owner, Mr. L.A. Lutrell, owned 120 acres, which adjoined land owned by his sisters, Abbie Hulet and Eula Tindell. They had visions of living on their land forever; living off of the land and their children and children's children living on their land, to be passed down from generation to generation - however this was not to happen. Since Highway 16 was unpaved and it was some distance to either Fayetteville or Prairie Grove from their land, they thought they were safe from the Government and outsiders. As Mrs. Marjorie Luttrell Hart reminded me; "we did not know we were poor, our wants were very simple and we had a good life."[20] Their families often took the wheat and corn to the Mill at Savoy, to be ground up and used, as was customary, on the family farm. Mrs. Hart's father and aunts felt as though they had been invaded when

the Government came in and wanted their lands. Their farms, even though they did not want to sell, were taken by the government through eminent domain, or, as it was explained to the Luttrell family, the farms were taken for the good of all the public; however, he was paid for his lands. Mr. Luttrell never worked for the Wiggans' Hole project. After his home was taken, Mr. Luttrell and his family moved to his father's farm, and he worked and lived with his father on his land, until he found some land three miles from his father's place. Luttrell worked his land until around 1947 when asthma forced him to give up yet more land and move into town. Mrs. Hart recalls that her family did not want to give up their land, as it was more than just land, it was their heritage, their life, and it was what they knew and loved.[21]

Some of the homes and farm land that were acquired for the project were not always condemned. Part of the original Resettlement Land was along the Illinois River Bottom - in the area known as A4 there was the BlackJack School House, where children attended. In A15, the H.D. Cunningham Farm (A7-12) which was part of the original purchase area, was an immense handsome barn, that was two stories, with two cupolas - had been prosperous farm and now hungry looking, but from the pictures,

A barn in the original purchase area, ca. 1936

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

it looked neat and tidy. Also in the original acreage was 173 acres, A13-18, owned by the First National Bank. In A26, there was a barn falling apart, corn crib style but with loft. A disturbing picture is of A34, a log house, story and a half, good shape, except for the front door — child's wagon in front.[22] This was a reminder that there were families living in these homes, regardless of their condition, people lived, loved and laughed in these homes.

Despite the conditions of their homes or their farms the LA-AK2, Northwest Arkansas, Forestry, Pasture Making, Grazing and Recreational Project was a boom to the economy in Northwest Arkansas. The project provided jobs where there had been no work - to many the work was boondoggling—useless work.[23] To people such as D. Boone, Stella Kearns and the numerous people the project employed, it was much better to boondoggle than it was to Hooverize.[24] At least these boondogglers had a job and a means to support their family.

There were many different jobs to be filled during the Wiggans' Hole project. There were Mule-skinner, who were the ones who drove the Mules that moved the rock and dirt so the dam and road could be built. In the beginning the Mule-skinners provided their own Mules. Later in the project the Government provided the mules. Not only were the Mule-skinners paid, but the Mules were also paid. The Mule-skinners received higher wages, because they had their own mules.[25] There were laborers, who began building the 102 acre lake, which was 31 feet deep. There was also the earthen dam that had to be built. There were seven cabins, the administration building, the bathhouse and the picnic tables that had to be constructed, and all of these were constructed of wood and rock from the area. "Ironwork that still exists today was done on-sight by local Blacksmiths."[26] The idea was to keep the area as natural as possible, by using material from within the area itself and to use as much local work as possible.[27]

There was more work to be done other than just construction of the buildings. The pasture land that had been over farmed and over worked had to be improved, and workers were needed for this tedious job. Approximately 6,000, of the original 18,000 acres, were to be used for grazing animals. However, due to the severe drought, high temperatures and frigid cold temperatures, plus over farming, there was much work to be done to make the land suitable for grazing animals. The land had to be

Posts and shakes used in construction projects in the Lake Wedington area, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

worked, tilled and converted from farm acreage into pasture land, and it was planted with Bermuda grass, Blue stem grasses and Korean lespedeza. In the forest area a total of 350,000 trees were planted, and included a variety of pines, locusts and black walnut trees. As the forestry land developed, there was also a look-out tower that had to be built so one could watch for forest fires that would destroy their hard work. There was approximately 1,000 acres planted as food for wildlife.[28] There was plenty of work to go around, plenty of work for the farmers whose farms and homes had been bought and who wished to work on the Government project. Many of the farmers were glad to have the work and would show up to work everyday, because it meant a way to support their families. It was not east work - a lot of the work was done by hand, there weren't all the fancy machineries used today - but the people who worked the jobs, who did the work, who sweated and toiled day in and day out, were thankful there was work.[29]

In December 1935, the displaced farmers began construction of the dam on Wedington Creek, which would eventually hold the 102-acre lake. Once the dam was finished, then "Wiggans' Hole" was filled in

Lookout Tower, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

Sewage System Pump Station, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

February 1938. Around the lake there were two ponds that were created, the original thirteen cabins, the administration buildings, and the picnic areas.[30] On the outer skirts of the "Wiggans' Hole" project along the Illinois River, a youth camp was constructed which included twenty-five cabins, a dining hall, a recreational hall and a swimming pool.[31]

A confusing issue is the Works Progress Administration. As stated previously, this project was a Land Utilities Project, under the supervision of the Rural Resettlement Administration, which eventually in 1937 evolved into the Farm Security Administration. The Supervisory, Management and Office personnel - such as Mr. Wiggans, Justice of the Peace Jim Farley, Mr. Paul Young, (to name a few) - were paid through the Rural Resettlement and/or the Farm Security Administration. However, the workers - general laborers/farmers - were paid by the Works Progress Administration. Therefore, the WPA did play a minor roll in the "Wiggans' Hole" project.[32]

In April 1938, the "Wiggans' Hole" project was completed and was dedicated on April 30th 1938. People came from as far as Oklahoma and Texas for the grand opening of Wiggans' Hole now referred to as Lake Wedington. Besides Mr. C.B. Wiggans there were people such as Congressman Claude Fuller, Secretary of Agriculture - Mr. Henry A. Wallace and Mr. C.F. Clayton from the U.S. Bureau of Agriculture Economy at the grand dedication. Claude Fuller described the Wiggans' Hole Project as:

> A guidepost to be followed in attainment of that more abundant life that our great President has give as the goal of his administration for all Americans.[33]

There were many speeches given that day. Speeches which praised President Roosevelt and the New Deal, speeches which praised Mr. Henry A. Wallace, and speeches which praised the work of the Farmers, who worked so hard and diligently to make a recreational area out of Wiggans' Hole.

The times of the 1930s were very hard for the people of Arkansas: The Great Depression was in full swing, there was a severe drought that

Cabin at Lake Wedington, ca. 1938

Photo from Friends of Lake Wedington Records, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries

had gripped the northwest corner of Arkansas, and the winter of 1932 and 1935 were severely brutal. Many of the farmers, who were barely able to eke out a living as farmers were able to apply to the FERA for assistance and/or jobs. The emergency government relief programs, through President Roosevelt and Mr. Wallace, enabled the farmers to maintain their family farms, despite the loss of their crops.[34] Yet, as people all over the nation and especially in Northwest Arkansas found out, it was not enough and sometimes more had to be done.

Wiggans' Hole was the help needed for the farmers and people of Northwest Arkansas. It was what helped the farmers make it through some very tough years; years of drought, years of unbearably cold winters, years of the Great Depression, years of tough times that were hard to overcome. There were those farmers, some in fear of foreclosure or some in fear of going hungry, who willingly sold their land, their homes, and their farms to the government. Others, were forced to give up their land. However the land was acquired, Wiggans' Hole boosted the economy of the area. It was the first major lake in the area and people came from all around to enjoy its many facilities. The project brought jobs to an area where there were none. It helped many families to re-establish themselves, and it made it possible for farmers to rebuild what had been lost.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Sugg, Ann (Daughter of C.B. Wiggans) & Hart, Marjorie (daughter of L.A. Luttrell) - Telephone Interview, November 2006.

[2] Wiggans, C.B., Personal papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938 (hereinafter known as Wiggans Papers)

[3] Wiggans, C.B., Interview. *Southwest Times Record*, June 28, 1936, p.17.

[4] National Archives and Records Administration website, www.archives.gov., "New Deal Agriculture."

[5] Wiggans, C.B., Interview. *Southwest Times Record*, June 28, 1934, p.1.

[6] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[7] *Progressive Star*, July 17, 1936, p.1; August 7, 1936, p.1.

[8] Dew, Stephen H., "The New Deal and Fayetteville, Arkansas, 1933-1941," Masters Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1987, p.116.

[9] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Wiggans, C.B., Interview. *Southwest Times Record*, June 28, 1934. p.1.

[12] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[13] Hart, Marjorie. (Daughter of L.A. Luttrell) Interview by Veronica McGlumphy, November 2006.

[14] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[15] Sugg, Ann (Daughter of C.B. Wiggans). Telephone interview by Veronica McGlumphy, October 2006.

[16] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[17] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[18] Quotation from Dickey and Branson, "How Farm Tenants Live," p.23.

[19] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[20] Hart, Marjorie. (Daughter of L.A. Luttrell), Interview by Veronica McGlumphy, November 2006.

[21] Hart, Marjorie. (Daughter of L.A. Luttrell), Interview by Veronica McGlumphy, November 2006.

[22] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[23] *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary*, 1972.

[24] Kearns, Stella. Lost Angeles, CA, March 14, 1936.

[25] Sugg, Ann (Daughter of C.B. Wiggans) Telephone Interview by Veronica McGlumphy, October 2006.

[26] *Grapevine*, XXII, Number 46, Fayetteville, AR., July 19, 1991.

[27] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[28] Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[29] Sugg, Ann. (Daughter of C.B. Wiggans) Telephone interview by Veronica McGlumphy, October 2006.

[30] *Daily Democrat*, December 4, 1935, p.1; Wiggans, Personal Papers, 1935-1938.

[31] Dew, Stephen H., "The New Deal and Fayetteville, AR, 1933-1941." May 1987, p.150; Wiggans, C.B., Personal Papers, Special Collections Department, University of Arkansas Libraries, 1935-1938.

[32] Sugg, Ann. (Daughter of C.B. Wiggans) Telephone interview by Veronica McGlumphy, October 2006.

[33] *Congressional Record*, LXXXIII, p. 2062; Dew, Stephen H., "The New Deal and Fayetteville, AR, 1933-1941," Masters Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1987, p. 150

[34] *Daily Democrat*, October 24, 1934, p.1.

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*Susan Young is the Outreach Coordinator at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History in Springdale. She also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Arkansas Historical Association.

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Wright, Forest
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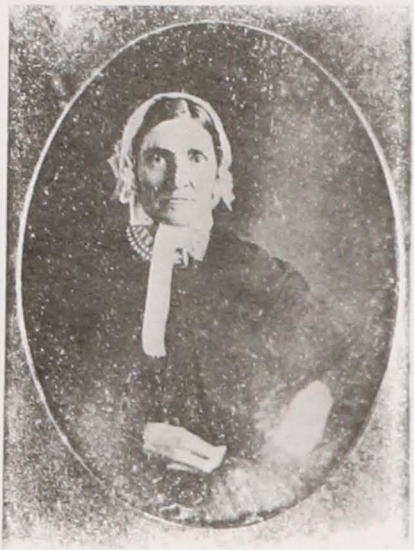
Young, Richard E.

News & Notices

Photograph Caption Correction

A photograph, included in the article "Life of Sarah Bird Northrup Ridge" article by Arlen D. Poole, published in the summer 2007 *Flashback*, was inadvertently labeled as Sarah Bird Northrup Ridge. The photograph was actually a portrait of Sarah Ridge Paschal Pix, who was sister of John Ridge and sister-in-law of Sarah Bird Northrup Ridge. The correct photograph is shown below.

The editor apologizes for this error.



Changes in Numbering of Flashback

Librarians and other interested parties should take note that the spring issue of the Flashback is now numbered as #1; subsequent issues will be numbered sequentially, with the summer issue being #2, the fall issue #3, and the winter issue #4.

Lake Wedington Anniversary to Be Celebrated

The 70th anniversary of creation of Lake Wedington will be celebrated on April 26, 2008, at the lake, beginning at 11:00 am. Ann Sugg's father, C.B. Wiggans, served as manager for the project and recounts her memories of the project in this issue of the Flashback.

In addition to the Lake Wedington anniversary, the 20th anniversary of the Friends of Lake Wedington organization and the 100th anniversary of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest will be celebrated at the same time.

PLANNED GIFTS

Making charitable gifts to the Washington County Historical Society will enable it to continue and expand its programs.

If you are making regular gifts to the Washington County Historical Society or would like to start, you may find it beneficial to set up or give:

1. A **charitable lead trust** that will pay income to WCHS for a set period.
2. A **charitable remainder trust** that will allow you to transfer property to a trust set up for WCHS without paying capital gains tax on the sale of the property.
3. **Appreciated securities** at their current value and take an income tax deduction for the year up to 30% of adjusted gross income.
4. **Gifts from your retirement account** that could be an integral part of planning for those withdrawals.
5. **An irrevocable life insurance trust** that could own your life insurance, when it no longer serves its purpose, to make a charitable gift that could reduce the estate's tax bill.

There are a number of ways to enhance your retirement plans while still providing for your charitable interests and making gifts you never dreamed possible. Consult with your financial advisor on other ways you can make charitable donations. These planned gifts will provide added tax benefits for you and your heirs while helping to support the vital mission of the Washington County Historical Society for years to come.

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Washington County Historical Society
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